Master project Environmental Planning Summer 2014: Iconic Species

Perceiving Landscape: The Role of Plants and Animals

Master Project Environmental Planning, 2nd semester

Supervision: Department of Landscape Planning and Development
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Duration: Summer term 2014

No of participants: 11 – 15 students

First meeting: Thursday 17.04.2014, 14:00 (s.t.) in EB 415

Background

The European Landscape Convention defines “landscape" as an “area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. In order to protect and develop landscape, it is important to understand what contributes to the perception of landscape characters.

The project is based on the following assumption: Experiencing landscape is grounded on the total impression of a scenery as well as on the perception of special landscape elements. Besides structural elements and abiotic natural resources, animals and plants are important natural elements. It is now presumed that specific regions host certain species which are of special importance regarding the landscape character and perception in that region. Prominent examples would be Olive trees in Greece, Cypresses in Toscana, storks in Wendland, or cranes at Rügen Island. If these species are perceived and recognized as special characteristics of particular regions the identification with landscape and the quality of landscape experience could increase.

Aims

The project aims to develop and to test methods and criteria for the identification of iconic species. Moreover suggestions for the implementation of an “iconic species concept” in landscape planning should be generated.

For this purpose the students will acquire basic knowledge regarding concepts of nature and landscape perception as well as methods of landscape assessment. In a second step existing information systems and planning fundamentals will be analysed regarding their aptitude as sources for an “iconic species concept”. Besides landscape plans, descriptions of protected areas, or the landscape type documentation by the national administration for nature protection, non-professional documents like tourist informations or community websites

should be considered. Moreover, empirical surveys in specific regions could help to collect information about iconic species and their importance for landscape experience. Having collected examples of species and regions, a method to implement the knowledge about especially iconic species in landscape planning should be developed. Goal and contents of the concept should be defined, criteria for iconic species should be named, appropriate planning levels and graphical depiction should be identified.

The project will work on case study regions in Germany and Europe. Result of the project could be the description of sources, methods, criteria and possible implementations for an “iconic species concept”.

Besides the professional aspects, the project aims to improve methodical and didactical skills. The ability to work in teams and to work scientifically, to create and hold presentations, to chair plenary sessions etc. will be practised and enhanced. Students are asked to understand the project as their proper concern and to develop and modify it by introducing their special interests regarding project contents and technical skills.